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## "TUMEFACTION" IN THE STUDY OF SPANISH

[A paper read at the Third Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish at Washington, D. C., December 27, 1919.]

The title of this paper is taken from a phrase occurring in an article by Professor Ernest H. Wilkins, of the University of Chicago, printed in the Bulletin of the New England Modern Language Association. He says, in part: "What then of Spanish? I have both knowledge and love of the Spanish language and literature. I have taught Spanish for years. I have the happiest memories of Spain. And yet I deplore the increasing tumefaction of the study of Spanish in this country. That Spanish should be widely studied I agree; but that it should be studied in such overwhelming numbers is but added evidence to the old indictment that we Americans see only that which is at hand. That Spanish should be studied for its literary value I agree, but I believe that no sane critic who knows the several European literatures would rank Spanish literature with Italian or with French in universal value. That Spanish should be studied for its commercial returns I agree, provided that it be studied in commercial courses; that Spanish should be studied by tens of thousands in our high schools and colleges for the sake of its money-making value I deplore" (*who would not? but is that why they study it?*), "both because the motive is one that should not dominate study in such schools, and because the promised gain is so largely illusory. Not one boy in fifty of those who crowd the Spanish courses will ever be a *perra chica* the richer for his work."

"Is it well," he says elsewhere, "that 3,000 students should be studying Italian and that 200,000 should be studying Spanish?" After a plaintive repetition of the query, he goes on, "My answer is, 'No.' It is not well that only 3,000 American school and college students should be receiving what Italian has to offer, and it is not well that 200,000 American school and college students should be devoting themselves to the acquisition of what Spanish has to offer. I do not mean that the study of Spanish is in itself undesirable; far from it. I do mean that the enrollment of such masses in Spanish, when the curriculum is full of courses urgently needed for the development of the student, is not justified

by the extent or quality of the Hispanic contribution to life. I am not attacking a language; I am attacking an excess."

He then quotes a number of teachers, all anonymous, in support of his argument; presents figures from England, whose language problems are quite distinct from ours; and concludes his paper with a plea for the artificial restriction of Spanish and "forcing" of Italian in these words: "I believe that the time has come in the college world when Italian should be deliberately developed and Spanish should be deliberately checked. If you are a college teacher of Romance, and admit the justice of my argument, will you not, by advice and control of registration, in the manner indicated in the early part of this paper" (*in plain words, by propaganda for Italian and refusal to permit all the students who wish to study Spanish to do so*), "help to rectify the situation in your own college?"

He goes on: "As for the schools, I think the time has come when Spanish should be deliberately checked, in favor chiefly of French and of non-linguistic subjects. I believe, too, that the time will soon come when Italian should be widely taught in secondary schools; but I do not advocate an immediate general introduction of courses in this subject, since we have at the present time neither an adequate supply of trained teachers nor an adequate supply of texts for secondary instruction. If, then, you are a school teacher of Romance, and admit the justice of my argument, I suggest that you help in such ways as these: by developing a general interest in things Italian; by advising those of your pupils who go to college to take Italian courses there; by preparing yourself through reading and study, for the teaching of Italian. I warrant you that such preparation will in itself bring you a sufficient reward.

"In the name of Wisdom, in the name of Skill, in the name of Fellowship, let us give to Italian its high and rightful place in American education."

To the last paragraph we breathe a hearty "Amen." As to the others, the readiest answer to Professor Wilkins' plea that occurs is an observation that applies not only to the subject in hand, but to life in general. Despite Teutonic philosophy, one man's prosperity does not necessarily mean another man's failure, and the only way to success does not lie over the shoulders of one's fellows. Dr. Wilkins' plea for the study of Italian, if divorced from his plaintive appeal for the restriction of Spanish, is one to which all modern

language teachers can subscribe and to which I believe all Spanish teachers do heartily subscribe. The Spanish teachers of this country believe in the cultivation of all modern languages, even German, for those who can profit by its study, but they do not agree that it is necessary artificially to restrict Spanish in order to foster the study of any other language. Indeed, I am sure that Professor Wilkins himself would be the first to admit that the coupling of these two questions in his paper is unfortunate. For one thing, he overlooks entirely the fact that many students study both French and Spanish, and that the elimination of Spanish would not mean any substantial increase in French, which is now being studied by the greatest number of pupils in its history, but an increase in German, which students would be compelled to choose as their second language. He himself admits that the facilities in Italian are lacking; what else is left but German? The practical result would be the restoration of German to its old position of domination. Is this what Professor Wilkins desires? I think not; indeed I know it is not. Professor Wilkins was my own Italian teacher as a college undergraduate, and I number him among the few great teachers that I have had. He is recognized as a sound scholar. The most charitable explanation that can be offered for this illogical confusion of two distinct questions is that his own great—and justified—love for Italian has led him to assume a manifestly partial, perhaps slightly jealous, attitude, which upon sober second thought I am sure he finds unsound and untenable.

The weak points in his argument have already been pointed out by Professor Northup in *HISPANIA* for October, 1919, pp. 204-5, and very intelligently and forcibly refuted by Mr. Juan C. Cebrián in *HISPANIA* for February, 1920, pp. 5-9. I have little to add to those excellent comments. I do wish to point out, however, that any such artificial restriction as Dr. Wilkins advocates would be an attempt to control the intellectual progress of the American people by artificial provisions. Such an attempt has never succeeded with the English-speaking races. The English language has grown and developed along natural lines, not along the lines of scholarly or pedantic theories. We have had a striking example of the futility of artificial attempts to control the development of American intellectual interests in the frantic efforts made to save German in the schools at the time of our entrance into the war. Despite the

pleas of scholars, teachers, professional men and scientists, including such men as ex-President Taft and Commissioner of Education Claxton, despite all the arguments cleverly presented by its supporters, German *went* from our schools because the bulk of the American people were convinced that some of its advocates had sinned against this country, and would have no more of it. The proposed artificial restriction of Spanish is therefore not only impracticable and futile, as all such attempts at artificial restriction must necessarily be in a progressive, Anglo-Saxon country, but it is undemocratic and in its essence oligarchical and un-American—an attempt by the few to determine what is good for the many.

The decline of German following the declaration of war left a gap in the schedules of thousands of American pupils, of which other subjects were not slow to take advantage. Italian, Latin, Spanish, and non-linguistic subjects had an equal opportunity to profit by this vast number of new students, but the bulk of the former German students, or those who were potential German students, turned to Spanish, and for good and natural reasons.

No one but the ignorant or intellectually dishonest can deny the worthiness of Spanish to hold its present position in American education. Mr. Cebrián has very clearly shown this fact. It is needless for me to point out its cultural value—that has never been questioned by any broadly educated man. Nor is it necessary for me to produce figures showing the population of the various countries where Spanish is spoken, their foreign trade, their wealth, etc. These claims of Spanish are accepted by all who have made a sincere investigation of the subject, and they have been summed up in convenient form in Professor Fitz-Gerald's remarkable pamphlet, "The Importance of Spanish to the American Citizen," and other articles. The growth of Spanish was inevitable, war or no war, and its position as the leading modern language of America was correspondingly inevitable. The sudden drop in German merely hastened the process; it was a *contributing*, not a primary, cause. Spanish is and must remain the first language in American schools for purely natural reasons, which have nothing to do with discussions as to whether Cervantes has contributed more to the happiness of the world than Goethe, or Blasco Ibáñez more than Sudermann. Such a natural advantage cannot be checked by artificial means or argued away by *ex parte* pleas. The Western Hemisphere is divided

between an English-speaking and—in the main—a Spanish-speaking race. Its destinies are distinct from those of Europe—a truth that our recent experience in international relations is impressing upon us ever more strongly. Our ultimate fate, whether we like it or not, is bound up with that of our sister republics of the other Americas, and Americans of vision must see that it is to our advantage to know and understand those upon whom we must rely for coöperation and support in the future.

We can gain a sympathetic understanding of these co-workers of ours in no better way than through a study of their psychology, their temperament, and their civilization, which can best be made through the medium of their language and their literature. Dr. Wilkins' remark about the commercial appeal of Spanish may be more or less true. Not one pupil in ten will ever derive any direct material advantage from the study of Spanish *or of any other foreign language*. But, thank goodness, in spite of certain discouraging signs, direct material advantage is not the primary aim of American education—if it were, upon the basis of comparative financial returns we should educate all our sons to be trainmen, shipyard workers, bricklayers, or plumbers, rather than lawyers or doctors or, especially, teachers!

For the average student, the great advantage of the study of a foreign language is that it is broadening and cannot be carried very far without a realization that nations, like individuals, differ in gifts and faculties, in psychology, and in temperament, but that differences in race-psychology do not necessarily imply the superiority or inferiority of one race to another. It is impossible to study the language and literature of another people without gaining an insight into its nature. If it is not a sympathetic insight, if our increased knowledge does not bring increased liking, at least our dislike is based upon sound knowledge, not vulgar ignorance or prejudice.

Such a knowledge of Hispanic-America can be gained from a study of Spanish and its sister-tongue, Portuguese. The American who knows Spanish can be of great assistance to his own country in helping to solve the problems which are continually arising in connection with our relations with Hispanic-America. Politically, intellectually, commercially, socially, North and South America are mutually dependent, and must inevitably continue in that relation. Since we cannot change our geographical and historical position we must accept this status, and do all that we can to cultivate friend-

ship, coöperation, reciprocal trust and confidence, so that we of North and South America may know and understand each other better. That our confrères in Hispanic-America realize this need for mutual understanding is evident from constant expressions of opinion, and from the vastly increased interest in English in those nations, in some of which English is now a required subject in secondary schools. (Cf. Professor Fitz-Gerald's article in *HISPANIA* for May, 1919.) For example, Dr. J. B. Zubiaur, a distinguished Argentinian educator, said in a recent paper on "American Educational Solidarity" (*Solidaridad Educacional Americana*, Buenos Aires, September, 1919): "To guarantee American, and to prepare for human, unity, our language must be bi-lingual, that is to say, we must speak Spanish and English."

Further evidence of the interest of Hispanic-Americans in English is easy to find. The University of Washington and the University of Chile have inaugurated an exchange of professorships, and the University of California has sent Dr. Chas. E. Chapman to the University of Chile in furtherance of a similar arrangement. Extensive plans are also now under way for the interchange of students and teachers between Hispanic-American and North American institutions.

So much for "tumefaction" in Spanish.

Another attack, or the same attack under another epithet, "nimiety," has been made on Spanish in a paper written by Dr. Chas. F. Wheelock, Assistant Commissioner in charge of secondary education in the State Education Department of New York State. This address, under the title of "The Modern Language Situation," was read last year at a meeting of the New York High School Teachers of German by Dr. Wm. R. Price, State Specialist in Modern Languages. After a paragraph protesting the disinterestedness of the author and laying claim to freedom from pleading "*pro doma sua*," the writer proceeds:

"The need for the study of Spanish in this country has been urged on three grounds: commercial or utilitarian, for linguistic discipline, and for cultural reasons. Undoubtedly there is some basis for urging the study of Spanish in our high schools, junior high schools and colleges, but it is vulnerable to the criticism of *nimiety*, or *too-muchness*. The enormous influx into Spanish classes in this city (New York) is evidence that the study is being under-

taken by thousands of pupils who will get no adequate returns from it. He is a bold man who will claim that Spain ranks with England, France, America, or Germany in any element of greatness. Its literature is far inferior to that of Italy. The average educated Englishman, American, German, or Frenchman credits Spain with only one great author—Cervantes—and only one great work—Don Quixote. Even in the novel, the only branch in which Spanish enthusiasts dare laud its contemporary literature, Spain is inferior to Russia. And what will it avail our American youth to enter into competition with Germany in the Spanish-American trade—admitting, for the sake of argument, that they will do this—unless, first, they really learn Spanish as the German commercial men are accustomed to learn it, and second, unless they also have German at their command? Is anyone in this country so simple as to imagine that the German agent in South America will be ignorant of English if he has to compete with England or America in the South American trade? On the contrary, he will know both English and Spanish perfectly, so as to match and overmatch every trick of the trader. If America overlooks this phase of the matter in preparing for the trade of her South American neighbors, she will be driven from the very markets she is seeking within a generation of the conclusion of peace."

The final paragraph of the address is also of interest. It is as follows:

"Not even on commercial grounds can Spanish be allowed, with impunity, to displace German, except on the assumption that Germany and the Germans are to be utterly destroyed as a nation; while the claim of Spanish over French in our schools is little short of criminal in view of the ties that bind us to France now and forevermore."

As the author expressly denies that he is a specialist in the field, we may disregard his misleading and ridiculous assertions as to the relative worth of Spanish, including his statement that even the Spanish novel is inferior, a manifest misinterpretation of a statement by Wm. Dean Howells. His disclaimer of authority makes it unnecessary for us to answer him. His remark, however, that German will be necessary equally with Spanish in gaining South American trade is open to question on logical grounds. We are in hearty accord with his belief that the German commercial man "will know



both English and Spanish perfectly, so as to match and overmatch" the American trader. In fact, we may be sure that he will know everything that will aid him to "match and overmatch" anybody or anything—any time or anywhere. But the argument that an American commercial man cannot succeed in competition with German commercial men for Spanish-American business with English and Spanish as his sole linguistic equipment is about as logical as claiming that the reputable physician must not only know his own science and how his patient will react to his treatment, but must also study the methods of the faker and quack, so as to meet him on his own ground, lest he be "matched and overmatched" by the latter.

The intimation that an attempt is being made to replace French by Spanish in our schools is wholly unfounded. The majority of teachers of Spanish also know and love French, although they have, like all sincere lovers, been careful not to lay themselves open to the charge of "protesting overmuch." Moreover, a great number of our students of Spanish have become interested in the subject through French, or in French through Spanish. Nearly everyone who acquires one foreign language desires to use it as a stepping-stone to further acquisitions of the same nature, and because both are Romance languages the relations of French and Spanish and of French teaching and Spanish teaching in this country have been remarkably close and sympathetic from the beginning. Neither French nor Spanish can lose by any increase in the number of students studying the other. Their progress is inter-dependent and inter-related.

The statement that Spanish cannot be allowed even on commercial grounds to displace German is on a par with the common assertion, of which Professor Wilkins has also unfortunately been guilty, that Spanish belongs only in commercial courses, a statement usually made by people who at the same time claim that even there it does not bring an adequate return. This, of course, is an indirect slur on the linguistic and literary claims of Spanish, and at the same time shows a misapprehension as to the nature of any language study. It is impossible to study any language purely as a commercial subject, just as it is impossible to study English as a purely commercial subject. In the words of Hon. Andrew J. Peters, Mayor of Boston and formerly Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, in a letter to the New York Evening Post, "I believe emphatically that

there is no such thing as commercial Spanish; and I cannot understand how the expression 'Spanish for commercial purposes' can mean anything but commercial Spanish, which does not exist, as there is no such thing as commercial English or commercial French, and so forth. The fact that closer commercial relations make imperative the study of a foreign language does not change a bit the nature of the language. As a fine French scholar said lately in Pittsburgh at the last meeting of the National Education Association, 'There is no difference between the language needed to buy merchandise and the language used to propose to a girl.' The sentences are built up just the same, and the existence of some dozens of technical words related to certain branches of human activity does not make a different language."

It is impossible to separate a language into literary and commercial elements, simply because no language is used in precisely that way. It is an absurdity to attempt to learn any language from but one angle; it must be studied as a whole.

The futility of any attempt to counteract the natural advantages of Spanish, which may be summed up in the word "propinquity," should be evident to any reasonable mind. Unfortunately, aside from sincere critics like Professor Wilkins, we are not dealing with reasonable minds, but minds excited by self-interest and embittered by disappointed ambitions. Save for the few sincere critics, most of the attacks on Spanish come from disgruntled ex-German teachers, some of whom actually teach Spanish for a living. We all remember the conditions which arose when German suddenly crumpled and numbers of German teachers found their livelihood slipping from their grasp; how they turned to French and Spanish for their daily bread, and how, unheeding the adage, "Don't bite the hand that is feeding you," a few of them have lost no opportunity to injure and decry them.

Lately these indirect critics have seized upon the "tumefaction" charge and hail with glee the support of men like Professor Wilkins, who are our natural allies, but who have allowed themselves to become the unwitting tools of propagandists for German. If the so-called "tumefaction" of Spanish is really tumefaction, if it is unjustified, if it ever should become an incubus or a menace to the American people, the people can be trusted to deal with it as adequately and summarily as they dealt with the "tumefaction" and

"too-muchness" of German, but it will be the American people, not disgruntled ex-German teachers, or anyone else with an axe to grind, that will determine the extent of the evil and prescribe the remedy to be applied.

In the meantime, the cut-throat tactics adopted by these gentry, with typical obtuseness, must inevitably lead to the elimination of all language teaching in American schools. The Spanish teachers of the United States wish other languages to succeed and believe that the prosperity of one means the prosperity of all. Most students of modern languages, as I have said, are not content with acquiring but one foreign tongue. The various languages are not mutually exclusive, in other words. The growth of Spanish will lead to a similar increase in interest in related subjects. What Spanish teachers decry is the shortsighted, insincere, "*pro domo sua*" attacks upon their subject. Sincere critics will attack not the numbers of students studying Spanish but the wretched teaching of Spanish perpetrated, among others, by some of the ex-German teachers who have flocked into the Spanish field.

To conclude: The friends of Spanish must realize that any attempt artificially to limit Spanish instruction can only result, as a practical matter, in the restoration of German or the growth of some non-linguistic subject which is a menace to the existence of the whole language group. Let them not be misled by the plea that such restriction will benefit Italian or French. There is no competition among the Romance languages, and never will be if Romance teachers will only refuse to let themselves be made catspaws of Kultur. How long does anyone suppose that the leaders of the highly organized German teachers of the country, with their numerical control of the various modern language associations, will continue to shout for French or Italian if they see an opportunity to restore German to its old dominating place?

In my opinion, the time has come for the former German teachers of the country to repudiate these trouble makers, these misrepresenting and unrepresentative spokesmen, and to accept the inevitable, realizing that, harsh as it may seem, the sins of the few, for which they are in no wise responsible, have made it impossible for German ever again to be the dominating foreign language in American education. That position has been yielded, permanently, to the Romance languages. It is for the German teachers to show

that they are what we believe the majority of them to be—100 per cent Americans and 100 per cent American educators, willing to join us in our determination that all language study shall be impartially fostered and protected, and that never again shall the study of any foreign language, *Spanish included*, be used as an instrument of propaganda by *any* foreign nation.

The Spanish teachers wish to be friends with their colleagues in the modern language field. They are willing to let Spanish stand on its own feet, satisfied that its claims, when investigated, are so evident as to need no advocacy. They will rejoice to see all other useful foreign languages studied, under proper conditions, in American schools and colleges. But they are heartily sick of unjust, unfounded, jealously inspired attacks, open or covert, and mean to combat them in the future with every ounce of their strength, whether the attackers be real enemies or merely pusillanimous bootlickers and notoriety-seekers from among their own number.

Of one thing we may be sure: the mistakes of the past will never be repeated. Never again will an attempt to deprive American children of their English language-consciousness obtain the degree of success that it attained with German. Henceforth the American people mean to insist that no foreigner shall be allowed to teach American children unless he has shown a genuine intention of becoming a thorough-going, *bona fide* American citizen or has given satisfactory evidence of a proper respect for American nationality and the English language, which is its strongest support and its essential characteristic.

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